

## POLITICS

# Henry Waxman, Key Democrat and Force for Health Care Law, Is to Retire

By JONATHAN WEISMAN JAN. 30, 2014

CAMBRIDGE, Md. — Representative Henry A. Waxman of California, a diminutive Democratic giant whose 40 years in the House produced some of the most important legislation of the era, announced Thursday that he would retire at the end of the year.

Mr. Waxman, 74, joins a growing list of House members who are calling it quits, many in disappointment over the partisanship and ineffectiveness of a Congress that may end up as the least productive in history.

“It’s been frustrating because of the extremism of Tea Party Republicans,” Mr. Waxman said in an interview on Wednesday. “Nothing seems to be happening.”

The frustration is felt on both sides. More than 30 House members have announced they will retire, resign or run for other offices this year, including stalwarts like George Miller, Democrat of California; Tom Latham, Republican of Iowa; Frank R. Wolf, Republican of Virginia; and Howard P. McKeon of California, chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Waxman’s departure after 20 terms in the House will be particularly poignant. One of his most notable accomplishments, the Affordable Care Act, which he was instrumental in writing, is shaping up

as the centerpiece of campaigns all over the country, not as a triumph but as a Republican cudgel. And the expansion of Medicaid that he has championed has been challenged in a number of states run by Republican governors.

The sprawling bill to combat climate change that he wrote was passed by the House in 2009 but died in the Senate, and President Obama has given up on efforts to push it through. Mr. Waxman has also spent years trying to strengthen the powers of the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency, but those efforts are under fire from the Republicans who control the House.

Still, Mr. Waxman will leave behind a legacy of entrenched accomplishments, including the Children's Health Insurance Program, which extends coverage to millions of low-income children; anti-tobacco, food safety and food-labeling laws; and the Ryan White Care Act, which allocates billions of dollars in federal money for the treatment of H.I.V. and AIDS.

He is also credited with laying the foundation for many of the executive actions that Mr. Obama, during his State of the Union address on Tuesday, pledged to pursue.

One involves the Clean Air Act, which Mr. Waxman helped write and which gives the Environmental Protection Agency the authority it is now exercising to regulate power plant emissions of greenhouse gases. Mr. Waxman saw to it that the bill would allow the president, on his own, to order improvements in automobile fuel efficiency and other energy saving efforts.

Mr. Waxman — whose 33rd Congressional District hugs the Southern California coast and includes Malibu, Beverly Hills and Santa Monica — has long been a House leader.

For five years beginning in 1979, he was chairman of the Energy and Commerce subcommittee on health and the environment. He often butted heads on environmental issues with the chairman of the full committee, John D. Dingell of Michigan, who at 6 foot 3 is 10 inches taller than Mr.

Waxman.

In 2008, Mr. Waxman defeated Mr. Dingell in a secret House vote to become chairman of the full committee.

After the Republicans regained control of the House two years later, he became the committee's ranking Democratic member.

Earlier, when he served on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Mr. Waxman conducted high-profile investigations of Wall Street, Major League Baseball, Pentagon contractors and the tobacco industry.

He has been unapologetic about the health care law during its troubled rollout in the fall, and he said that he was confident it would survive and that its use as a political weapon would diminish.

"I'm proud of the Affordable Care Act," he said. "I think it's a terrific piece of legislation."

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